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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were (1) to develop a profile of the disadvantaged student and (2) to arrive at an estimate of how many vocational students in New Hampshire may be eligible for services under the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976. Two different populations participated in the study. The first group was composed of 49 subjects of which 24 were disadvantaged. The second group was composed of 54 subjects of which 17 were documented disadvantaged. A variety of items relating to social behavior was considered for the study. However, the list was reduced to teacher-rated performance, student self-rating, age, sex, attendance, class standing, program completion, and teacher-rated maturity. The study found that most all vocational students are disadvantaged, in that no distinguishing characteristics separate vocational students from disadvantaged students. A typical vocational student may be male or female, 17 years old, and in the lower 25 percentiles in class standing. They tend to be average in performance and exhibit a level of maturity that can be classified as average. However, they are surprisingly more internal than external regarding locus of control. They are absent several times a year, and two of five enrolled will complete their programs. It was suggested that improved program placement should be a major concern for vocational educators. In addition, further study may provide evidence that initial program placement is acceptable but that academic responsibilities override the commitment to vocational education. Further study was suggested. (Author/KC)

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A Study On

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE DISADVANTAGED STUDENT

FINAL REPORT

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SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE DISADVANTAGED STUDENT

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SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE DISADVANTAGED STUDENT

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to (1) develop a profile of the "Disadvantaged Student" and (2) arrive at an estimate of how many vocational students may be eligible for services under the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482).

Two different populations participated in the study. The first group was composed of 49 subjects of which 24 were disadvantaged. The second group was composed of 54 subjects of which 17 were documented disadvantaged. A variety of items relating to social behavior were considered for the study. However, the list was reduced to teacher rated performance, student self-rating, age, sex, etc.

We found that, in general, most all vocational students are disadvantaged, in that there are no distinguishing characteristics separating vocational students from disadvantaged students.

We found that a typical vocational student may be male or female, 17 years old and their respective class standing will be in the lower 25 percentile. They tend to be average in performance and exhibit a level of maturity that can only be classified as average. However, they will surprise you in that they are more internal than external regarding "locus of control". They will be absent several times a year and two out of five enrolled will become program completers.

In summary, it would appear that improved program placement should be a major concern for vocational educators. In addition, further study may provide evidence that initial program placement is acceptable but academic responsibilities override the respective commitment to vocational

education. Making assumptions based on the limited dates available is hazardous, but it appears that enough information surfaced to support further study.

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OVERVIEW

This is the final report regarding skills and attributes of the disadvantaged student. The study was undertaken because there was a concern that "Disadvantaged Student" described a population much greater in numbers than previously imagined. However, students were not being identified and this study has made an effort to develop a profile of the "Disadvantaged Student".

There is speculation regarding the disadvantaged student and assumptions related to individual services. There is documented research where authors address individual change. One area of concentrated study relates to "locus of control", a term which basically refers to an attitudinal change with an application of behavior modification techniques. In any event, this study was undertaken to determine who receives services and derive an estimate of how many people may be eligible for services.

This specific study was initiated because there was suspicion that a much larger portion of vocational students could be classified as disadvantaged. Authorities at the State level were in agreement and funds were provided to conduct this study by the Vocational-Technical Division, New Hampshire State Department of Education, Concord, New Hampshire.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 require:

> . . . educator to look at each person as an individual. It encourages educators to use their imagination and creativity to meet the special and unique needs of youth and adults with academic or economic handicaps and mental or physical disabilities which prevent them from succeeding in the regular vocational education programs (Resurge, 79, preface).

When educators address specific concerns such as "special and unique need of students with academic or economic handicaps", it requires an understanding of the individual needs of the student documented as disadvantaged. Educational scientists have established that intervention can negate academic handicaps. However, it would appear that additional services should reflect the cultural patterns related to society at this point in time. In summary, services should be extended beyond remedial.

IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

It is apparent that a large number of vocational students can be classified as disadvantaged within the guidelines as specified. Literature places emphasis on low self-esteem and a multitude of other character attributes negative to one's success as the commonality of all disadvantaged students. In addition, there are singular and multiple factors that allow students to accept failure as a way of life. It may be the home and/or school that reinforces the philosophic role that an individual cannot change, that one cannot be responsible for one's life-style. Such students share common characteristics of social promotion, one parent home, no appropriate role model, no tangible goals, and poor decision-making skills. Such students will rationalize their individual responsibilities regarding truancy, alcohol, drugs, pregnancies, and lack of interest in school. Their individual concept is negative and the present school system will generally reinforce that belief. In any event, peer group influence will prevail in a situation where all other support systems have failed to provide evidence that a specific individual controls his/her own destiny.

We do know that a large number of students enrolled in public education, and more specifically vocational education, have one or more of the previous listed handicaps and are eligible for services as proposed in the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482). However, our process of identification is inconsistent and implementation of services is not always of uniform quality.

This study developed from a concern that "disadvantaged" is not just an individual student, but groups of students with identical needs. Vocational educators have the opportunity, a mission, to teach students about individual self-respect, self-esteem and the meaning of responsibility for one's own actions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocational educators stress values relating to self and society. How well, in comparison to other forms of education, is not presently known. However, the simulated work world that vocational educators utilize in the classroom teaches responsibility and fair play. It offers the opportunity for immediate response and group activities. A student must provide the interest and understanding that enables each student to gain self-respect as a contributing member of society. The major responsibility of vocational educators is to insure that in training the student for an occupation that we do not limit the freedom of the individual to the present day social or political realities.

Vocational education will always have a large number of students not succeeding in anything enrolled in occupational training. It is important that students with low self-esteem and who also exhibit an external locus of control be immediately recognized and referrals made.

> . . . locus of control refers to the degree in which an individual person (i.e. student, worker) accepts responsibility for the outcome of his or her own behavior. A person who believes that what happens to him is a result of his own behavior is said to have an "internal locus of control". Conversely, a person who believes that what happens to him is a matter of "luck", "chance", or the whims of "powerful others" is said to have an "external locus of control". (Gardner and Warren, 1978, 89)

In a school setting, this means that students who are internal will be more likely to achieve success than those who are external. Tseng (1970) reports significant means difference between internal and external vocational rehabilitation clients (W-140) on numerous variables. Internals were found to be higher on:

> . . . their ability to work with others, cooperation, self-reliance, courtesy, reliability, work tolerance, work knowledge, care of equipment, safety practices, compliance with shop rules, training satisfaction, need for achievement. . . (page 487)

Tseng's study and numerous others, including Gardner and Warren (1978), stress the importance of this variable in both academic and work achievement. In summary, people:

> . . . who tend to be more internal on locus of control will be more achievement oriented, more attuned to learning useful information for future performance. . . and will place greater value on improving skills. . . (Cowan, 1979, 17)

This variable is of particular importance for educators who deal with the disadvantaged student. Empirical evidence consistently shows that disadvantaged people tend to be more external on locus of control. As Lefcourt (1966) points out in summarizing the research in this area:

> . . . groups whose social position is one of minimal power either by class or race (or handicap) tend to score higher in the external control direction (page 212).

A child is not born disadvantaged, environmental factors are responsible. Every person has expectation to achieve, whether it be socially or through attainment of a good job which, in turn, provides the good things of life. A person with an external locus of control developed from a negative environment is aware that others have achieved and becomes frustrated with failure. It is knowing that one will never

be successful that robs a human being of all dignity and, consequently, excludes one from the dominant culture.

Educational research scientists have addressed this and related problems for many years. A low-self-concept (Dello-Dora, 1966), a lack of motivation (McClelland, 1963), unable to control lifestyle (Potter, 1966), position choice (Tiederman, David V. and O'Hara, Robert P., 1963, p. 70), freedom of choice (Wirtz, Willard, 1975) and environmental influence (Holland, J., 1973, p. 13) are just a few of the numerous authors that relate to the problems of the disadvantaged.

It is apparent that the problem of the disadvantaged student is not new, it did not recently materialize. The problem has been with society for a number of years and has been addressed by a number of notable educators. Unfortunately, it appears that educators in the field do not communicate with research scientists. The school attempts to solve racial problems by busing and on a more limited basis, where there is no racial problem, by heterogeneous class grouping. The school authorities fail to consider that homogeneous grouping takes place in school reflecting the environment of the community. Separation is accomplished in a very subtle manner through course selection, extra-curricular participation, and, to a lesser degree, dress, attractiveness and personality of the individual. It is a form of "social" sorting that begins in the seventh grade and continues throughout life. Vocational educators recognize the inherent problem and attempt to provide a system of learning that supports and enhances the character attributes that are essential to the real world. The vocational education process strives to implement a program that allows each student to experience the rewards of making a contribution to society. In addition, the curriculum places emphasis on good work

habits and individual growth. The challenge for vocational educators in a typical high school of 1,000 students, 400 of them electing vocational courses, are psychological problems, cultural problems, and economic problems. It is probable that approximately 160 of these 400 students are not succeeding academically and have, for that reason, been placed in vocational education. They may read at the fourth grade level and have limited computational skills. It is also certain that these 160 students have never experienced success in school or outside of school. By the time these students have reached the 11th grade and vocational education, they have it firmly fixed in their minds that they will never be a part of the good life as publicized on television. Vocational educators have, in fact, been asked to find the solution to a problem created and maintained by other educators and society.

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

This study will provide a profile of the disadvantaged student. In addition, the study will provide an estimate of how many disadvantaged students are involved in vocational education.

There is a problem and multiple options of attaining solutions. As a local vocational administrator, I would enjoy having all my students graduate and be successful, however, we still have a high percentage of leavers. In general, I have found that educational scientists writing about intervention techniques will not solve the problem and local authorities placing emphasis only on remedial reading and mathematics will not be successful in acquiring a solution to the problem. However, it is the contention of this study that the problem is not being addressed by local authorities appropriately and that educational scientists in general are not practitioners of their research. In summary, there is a lack of cooperation.

The contribution from the study is to illustrate a need and a much greater need than most educators recognize.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This report has recorded and tabulated multiple variables regarding teacher graded performance, class standing, locus of control orientation, age, sex, etc. It was a report that examines the differences between documented disadvantaged vocational students and the total vocational population.

Our major concern is:

1. Are there differences between identified disadvantaged vocational students and vocational students regarding job performance?
2. Will vocational students rate themselves higher on internal locus of control than identified disadvantaged vocational students?
3. Is there a relationship between teacher rated job performance and student self-ratings regarding locus of control?

In addition, we want a visual representation of the disadvantaged vocational student regarding age, sex, class standing, attendance and program completers.

JUSTIFICATION

The amount of funding on a national scale enabling disadvantaged students to receive support services has cost millions of dollars over the past several years. A review of the literature reveals that many studies have been published with a focus on what the disadvantaged student requires to become a contributing member of society. However, there appears to be little communication between the authors and the practitioners in the field. In addition, there is little evidence of studies with an emphasis on how many disadvantaged students are enrolled in vocational education.

The implication of this study is that a majority of students enrolled in Trades and Industry vocational programs are disadvantaged, but not identified.

DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

Different Situations Inventory (DSI) - refers to a locus of control instrument developed by Gardner and Warren (1978). The Self-Report Form is a version of the Different Situations Inventory in which the subject is asked to answer questions about himself/herself.

Job Performance - refers to vocational staff rating of subjects and their related accomplishments in the vocational laboratory.

Locus of control (LC) refers:

> . . . to a person's belief about the degree to which reinforcements are contingent upon his own behavior. Persons who believe that reinforcements are contingent upon their own behavior, capacities, or attributes are said to have an internal locus of control (ILC). Persons who believe that reinforcements are not under their personal control but rather under the control of powerful others or may be attributed to "luck", "chance", or "fate", are said to have an external locus of control (ELC). (Gardner, 1974, p. 8)

Vocational Students - refers to all vocational students enrolled in the Automotive, Auto Body, Welding, Machine Shop, Building Trades, Food Services, Child Care and Distributive Education vocational programs.

Identified Disadvantaged Vocational Students - refers to those students having received referrals requesting support services from program staff members.

METHODOLOGY

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SETTING

This study was conducted at Portsmouth Senior High School, one of the larger secondary institutions in the State of New Hampshire. Portsmouth High School is one of the twenty (20) designated vocational centers in the State of New Hampshire and is a comprehensive high school with an enrollment of 1800 students.

Portsmouth, New Hampshire is the major economic and population center of southeast New Hampshire. Pease Air Force Base and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard add to the economic importance of the area.

Portsmouth High School offers comprehensive educational programs for grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 but vocational education is limited to 11th and 12th grade students. The vocational programs enroll approximately 40% of the 11th and 12th grade students (number = 350). Graduate follow-up studies reveal that 26% of the vocational students continue their education and 75% of the vocational students are employed locally after graduation.

Classroom Setting

Testing will take place in the Vocational Support Center. The room is 40' x 30', or 1,200 square feet. The room is equipped with tables and chairs, enough to accommodate 60 students. It is a new room (construction of the vocational wing completed six years ago) with more than adequate ventilation and lighting.

Instrumentation

Different Situations Inventory, Self-Report Form (DSI)

The Different Situations Inventory (DSI) is a locus of control measure developed by Gardner and Warren (1978). The Different Situations Inventory is a paper and pencil, 20 question presentation of forced choices scored in the direction of internality. According to Cowan (1979), persons with an internal locus of control will be:

> . . . more achievement oriented, more attuned to learning useful information for future performance. . . and will place greater value on improving skills. . . (p. 17)

Reliability

A test-retest reliability coefficient of .901 is reported by Ifenwanta (1978). Using an "item difficulty and discrimination" approach, he also reports that the DSI was ". . . strongly discriminative between the upper and lower median groups" (p. 3). Ifenwanta also reported that the Different Situations Inventory was ". . . a very reliable instrument with about 85% of the test items significantly correlated to the total score" (p. 50).

Validity

The issue of content validity was addressed during the developmental stages of the instrument; content selection was determined by comparison of items to typical items in locus of control measures previously existing. Items were developed for each of the four sub-construct categories: (1) independence-dependence, (2) other directed-innerdirected, (3) passive-active, and (4) responsible-not responsible. The original items were submitted to three judges who had published research in regards to locus of control. Judges were found to be 100% in agreement with each other and the authors in labelling items "external or internal".

Ifenwanta (1978) found a high positive significant correlation between the DSI and Rotter's I-E scales (R=.66, P=.01, N=40). It was also found that the Self-Report Form of the Different Situations Inventory predicted career maturity in adults with a significant correlation between the Different Situations Inventory and the Attitude Scale of Crites' Career Maturity Inventory (Ifenwanta, 1978, p.37).

Another test of content validity is the relationship between locus of control and achievement. From social learning theory one can predict that persons with an internal locus of control would be "achievers". In a CETA training program, Von Esch (1978) found that the DSI discriminated between high and low achievers. He also cites an unpublished study by Gardner and Kurtz in which they found a significant correlation between the DSI and academic achievement of female college students. Thus, the Different Situations Inventory has shown in several areas to possess good reliability, excellent content, related criteria and content validity.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study has focused on two items: (1) develop a profile of a "Disadvantaged Student" and (2) derive an estimate of how many vocational students are eligible to receive services under the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482)

In attempting to meet our stated objectives we have utilized two separate populations but the representation of the populations is a mixture of academic, disadvantaged and handicapped.

The first population of 49 subjects was drawn from a pool of 125 vocational students. Twenty-four of these students are documented disadvantaged students. We tabulated and found percentage differences between (1) the total group of 49 and (2) the disadvantaged students numbering 24 in the following areas: sex, attendance, class standing, program completers, teacher rated performance, and teacher rated maturity.

We found that sex was not applicable to this study. Other categories are listed in figure 1.

CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES

Summary of Data Analysis

Category	Total Population N=49	Disadvantaged Population W=24	Percent Differences
Class Standing	.782	.8152	4.77 1/7
Attendance	.0638	.059	7.6
Program Completer	.40	.334	17.0
Performance as rated by teacher	.0663	.06	9.7
Maturity as rated by teacher	.063	.055	12.7

Figure 1

It is interesting to note that in class standing there is little difference between the two groups. In addition, the difference between the two groups in performance and also maturity is not significant. In collecting the data regarding class standing, guidance provided the information and percentiles were used where 3% is excellent and .95% means the lower end of the class. Vocational students as a group do not fare well in class standings which indicates that supportive studies (math, English, etc.) are not accepted by vocational students as important to one's lifestyle. Regarding performance and maturity, teachers were requested to rate subjects on a scale of 1 - 10, where one is low and ten is excellent. A 9.7% difference for performance and a 12.7% for maturity are meaningful in that there is no significant differences between the two groups.

Attendance was an interesting outcome in that the disadvantaged population had a better attendance record than the total population.

The last category to be addressed is program completers and this may generate some concern. It could also generate some positive direction. A 17% difference between groups place some emphasis on assessment, selection, guidance, interest and, in general, participation in a vocational program.

The Different Situations Inventory (DSI-Self) was administered to the second population of 54 subjects. The data generated was collected, tabulated and percentage differences determined between (1) the total group of 54 and (2) the disadvantaged subjects numbering 17.

Our objective was to determine if there is a significant difference between the two groups regarding social behavior. The instrument used was developed by Gardner, David C. and Warren, Sue Ellen (1978). The

instrument was selected based on its high correlation with the Career Maturity Inventory, Crites, J.O. (1973). In addition, the Different Situations Inventory (DSI-Self) is able to separate subjects into internals and externals.

A major postulate of Rotter's Social Learning Theory (1954, 1966, 1975) is locus of control. The literature emphasizes that individuals with an internal locus of control believe they can effect change in their lives. They understand that there is a relationship between behavior and outcome. One can logically deduce then, that a person with an internal locus of control will tend to:

(a) be more alert to those aspects of the environment which provide useful information for his future behavior,

(b) take steps to improve his environmental condition, and

(c) place greater value on skill or achievement reinforcement and be generally more concerned with his ability. (Rotter, Chance, and Phares, 1972 pp. 293-294)

It would appear that students with an internal locus of control are more realistic and, therefore, better able to cope with life's demands. Thus, there is evidence that students who tend to exhibit no internal locus of control will be rated higher on job performance than those students who tend to exhibit an external locus of control. However, there is not enough evidence to support a statement that job performance and internal locus of control for vocational students at the secondary level form a significant relationship.

It is also interesting to note that the percentage difference between the two groups regarding "locus of control" is surprisingly small.

DIFFERENT SITUATIONS INVENTORY (DSI-Self)

Total Population N=54	Disadvantaged Population	Percent Difference
.0988	.0931	5.8

Figure 2

There is no significant difference between the two groups in a variety of categories. However, there remains one unanswered question regarding program completers. It appears that disadvantaged students are making poor program selections, not able to make a commitment for program time, family moves out of the area, accepts employment, etc. In addressing the question of validity in program selection, the literature stresses that career motivated individuals will make a commitment to occupational choice based on experience within the environment. The basic theme of Super's theory:

> . . . that the individual chooses occupations whose characteristics will allow him to function in a role that is consistent with his self-concept, and that this later conception is a function of his developmental history (Herr, 1970, p. 26)

The key is "experience within the environment" and my clinical experience as Director of Vocational Education enables me to state that vocational students have limited experience in real life. It further allows me to state that with the limited experiences, vocational students are apt to make poor choices in selecting occupational careers. The majority are allowing themselves to be controlled by:

> . . . powerful others, . . . (Gardner and Warren, 1978)

Based on present practices I am able to predict that a secondary vocational school in the State of New Hampshire with 50% program completers, a minimum of 750 hours skill training, is doing a superlative job. I would hope they are recognized for this achievement.

In summary, all vocational students are disadvantaged. They may be male or female but will probably be 17 years old. Their class standing will be in the lower 25 percentile. However, absence will occur on the average of seven times during the year. They will tend to be average in performance and maturity as rated by the vocational teachers. On a scale of 1 - 10, they will average six. They will also surprise you in that they are more internal than external regarding locus of control. That might seem preposterous considering class standing but class standing is determined by additional obligations beyond vocational skill training. Unfortunately, only two out of five will be program completers.

Making several assumptions based on the limited dates available in this study is hazardous; however, it appears that some information was generated that warrants further study. The study has suggested that most vocational students are disadvantaged in that the only distinguishing characteristic between a vocational student and a documented disadvantaged vocational student is the statistical difference of being classified as a completer or leaver.

In making recommendations for improving vocational education, I would urge that emphasis on program placement be initiated. The experience factor, career exposure, vocational assessment, parental support and improved guidance activities are areas that can be improved upon in most every school. In any event, a study to evaluate secondary vocational students and their respective social behavior is exceedingly difficult and requires additional study.

APPENDIX

Different Situations Inventory (D-S-I SELF)

Name (or I.D.) _____ Date _____

Please consider your observations of your own behavior in the past and indicate how you think you would respond in different situations described below. Even though both alternatives may seem appropriate to you, please choose the one you think most fitting for you. If you are not certain, please guess.

CIRCLE EITHER A OR B BUT NOT BOTH

1. In buying new shoes, I would be more influenced by:
   A. Current fashions.
   B. Personal preferences.

2. If I received an unexpected bonus, I might say:
   A. "This is my lucky day!"
   B. "Hard work pays off!"

3. After doing a very good job, I would feel:
   A. Proud that it was such good work.
   B. Proud that someone praised the work.

4. I tend to believe that an ideal future career depends most on:
   A. Hard work toward the goal, more than luck.
   B. Good luck along with the work.

5. Asked to volunteer for a community service job, I would want to know:
   A. How much time and effort would be required.
   B. If significant peers had already agreed to help.

6. When confronted by another person's disagreement, I would:
   A. Withdraw gracefully.
   B. Try to clarify the issue.

7. Given a complex task, I would probably:
   A. Try to complete the task without help.
   B. Seek consultation at each stage.

8. If asked to estimate time required to bicycle five kilometers, I would:
   A. Tend to approximate the estimates of peers.
   B. Hold to own estimate even if it differs from those of peers.

9. My reaction to learning that a radio just purchased had poor tone:
   A. "The clerk sold me a bill of goods!"
   B. "Next time I'll know not to buy the cheapest one!"

10. I would prefer a TV detective show in which:
    A. The hero works alone.
    B. The police consult a famous detective.

11. After failure on a test, I might attribute blame to:
    A. The test itself.
    B. Lack of preparation.

12. When somebody gets angry at me, I might feel:
    A. Maybe he'll get over it after a while.
    B. A nice letter of explanation might clear the air

13. I might attribute difficulty in learning to improve at tennis to:
    A. Poor teaching by the coach.
    B. Not enough practice.

14. In studying for an exam, I would prefer:
    A. Studying with another student.
    B. Studying in private.

15. If another person says critical things about me, my most likely reaction might be to think:
    A. "I wonder if others think the same thing about me."
    B. "Well, I'm not so sure I agree with that opini

16. Type of game I prefer:
    A. A game of chance.
    B. A game of skill.

17. I would feel that to reach my goal in my life, it's important to know:
    A. The right people.
    B. What I really want from life.

18. When people are mean to me, I might feel:
    A. Very concerned because it is important to h lots of friends.
    B. Very concerned, but that it is possible to ge without such people.

19. In a baseball game, I might attribute my excell performance to:
    A. Having "a good day."
    B. Rigorous practice.

20. Not finding a personal item in an expected pla I might say:
    A. "I wonder if I left it somewhere else?"
    B. "I wonder if somebody took it by mistake?

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